



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **THREE ORANGE COUNTY STUDENTS WIN STATEWIDE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY POSTER CONTEST**

**ORLANDO, Fla.** —April 20, 2017 — Three Orange County Public Schools (OCPS) students will be honored in front of the School Board at the April 25 meeting for being named statewide winners of the 2017 WalkSafe® Statewide Poster Contest. There were 130 finalists throughout the State of Florida, with submissions from 70 elementary schools. The WalkSafe program reached more than 4,000 OCPS students. The winners in their respective categories are:

- Paige Russell from Dommerich Elementary in the Kindergarten to First grade category
- Annalisa Ho from Lake Sybelia Elementary in the Second to Third grade category
- Douglas Gold from Lake Sybelia Elementary in the Fourth to Fifth grade category

WalkSafe is a three-day curriculum created by the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine that satisfies Florida Standards for Health Education, Physical Education and Visual Arts and aims to decrease the number of children injured while walking, increase physical activity, and encourage the use of walkable environments. The curriculum combines classroom instruction, interactive practice through physical education, and conceptual learning through art class culminating in submissions to the annual poster contest.

The *Best Foot Forward* for pedestrian safety initiative and OCPS teamed up with WalkSafe to educate students about pedestrian safety. The WalkSafe poster contest winners will be honored and receive prizes at the Orange County School Board meeting, which will take place April 25 at 5:30 p.m. at the Ronald Blocker Educational Leadership Center, 445 W. Amelia St., Orlando, Fla. The winners also will have their original posters framed for display at their schools.

Pedestrian injuries/fatalities are an epidemic in Florida as evidenced by the top five most dangerous metro regions in the nation are Cape Coral/Ft. Myers; Palm Bay/Melbourne/Titusville; Orlando/Kissimmee/ Sanford; Jacksonville; and Deltona/Daytona Beach/Ormond Beach, according to the 2016 “Dangerous by Design” study by Smart Growth America.

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### **About WalkSafe®**

WalkSafe is a three-day elementary school curriculum that satisfies more than 10 Next Generation Sunshine State standards. Created in 2001 by Dr. Gillian Hotz, the program is based out of the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine to teach students in kindergarten through grade 5 to safely walk to and from school. Since its inception, Miami-Dade County's pedestrian accident figures for elementary school aged children decreased by 72 percent. To learn more, visit [www.walksafe.us](http://www.walksafe.us).

### **About Best Foot Forward**

The *Best Foot Forward* pedestrian safety initiative was launched in June 2012 to reduce pedestrian deaths and injuries in Metro Orlando by getting drivers to yield to people walking in crosswalks and encouraging pedestrians to be more careful crossing the street. More than a campaign, this "Triple-E" behavioral change process seeks to create lasting social good through the consistent and persistent application of low-cost engineering, community education, and high-visibility enforcement.

Initiated by Bike/Walk Central Florida under the leadership of former Orange County Mayor Linda Chapin, spearheaded by Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer and Mayor Teresa Jacobs, the Best Foot Forward coalition includes Orange County Government, Orange County Public Schools, Orlando Health, Lynx, Winter Park Health Foundation, MetroPlan Orlando, the City of Orlando, Winter Park, Maitland, Winter Garden, Apopka, and towns of Eatonville and Windermere as well as police chiefs throughout Orange County led by Orlando Police Chief John Mina and Orange County Sheriff Jerry Demings.

The long-term goal is to cut the number of people struck by vehicles in half in ten years. The short-term goals are to increase driver yield rates by 60 percent on roads posted 35 mph and higher, and a 10 percent increase on driver yield rates year over year on roads posted 40 mph and higher. To learn more, go to [www.iyield4peds.org](http://www.iyield4peds.org).

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